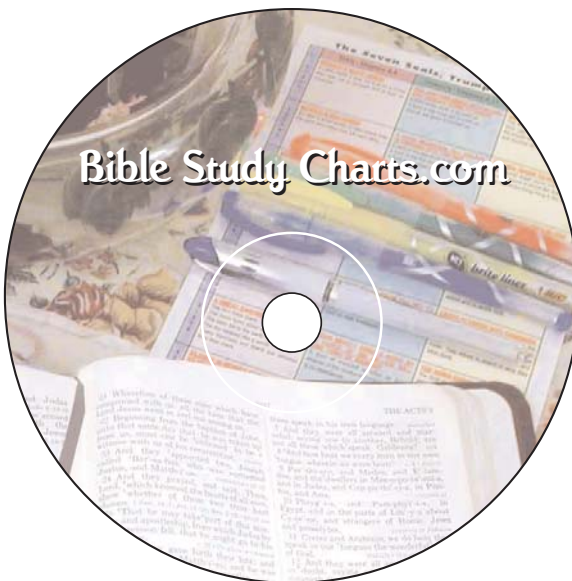


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Rewards – The Five Crowns

I. THE CROWN OF LIFE

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. James 1:12.

This reward could be called the lover's crown. We find strength to overcome temptation and endure trials through God's love, and our love for God. Without our love for God trials can cause us to become bitter and lose the "crown of life."

All believers have eternal life (John 3:15,16), but not all believers will be rewarded with the "crown of life". This crown will be given to those who are "faithful unto death" (Rev. 2:10). To receive the "crown of life," we must love the Lord more than our own life. "Whosoever shall save his life (live or self) shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's (live for Christ at all cost) the same shall save it" (Mark 8:35). This reward will be given to those who live for Christ, and endure temptations, in the power of the love of God (1 Cor. 10:13).

II. THE CROWN INCORRUPTIBLE

And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. 1 Corinthians 9:25

Paul makes use of the Greek games to illustrate the spiritual race of the believer. They ran to win a "corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible" crown.

1. We must deny self of anything that would weigh him down and hold him back (Heb. 12:1).
2. We must keep our eyes fixed on Christ (Heb. 12:2).
3. We must find our strength in the Lord (Eph. 6:10-18).
4. We must place our all upon the altar of the Lord (Rom. 12:1,2).
5. We must, by faith, refuse anything that would impede our spiritual progress (Heb. 11:24-29).

We are not to be spiritual spectators. We must enter the race and run to win the "incorruptible crown."

III. THE CROWN REJOICING

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy. 1 Thes 2:19-20

The "crown of rejoicing" is the soul winner's crown. The greatest work you are privileged to do for the Lord is to bring others to a knowledge of Christ as personal Saviour.

1. It is wise to win souls to Christ (Prov. 11:30).
2. Turning a sinner from the error of his way saves him from death. (James 5:20).
3. The angels in heaven rejoice when a soul is won to Christ (Luke 15:10).
4. Those who lead many to righteousness will shine as the stars forever. (Dan. 12:3).

The soul winner will not rejoice alone—all of heaven will rejoice with him when he receives the "crown of rejoicing" (John 4:36).

IV. THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. 2 Timothy 4:8

The “crown of righteousness” is a reward, and not to be confused with the “righteousness of God” which we receive when we become a Christian; for at that time, we are “made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). The crown of righteousness is a reward to be earned by the saved. If we look for, and love the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ, it will affect our whole life. Look at the dynamic impact this truth had in the life of the Apostle Paul. He could say:

1. “I have fought the good fight” (1 Tim. 4:7). He fought a spiritual battle throughout his Christian life, and won. He never surrendered to the enemies of righteousness (Eph. 6:12).
2. “I have finished my course.” He had a course to travel, and he did not detour the hard places; neither did he look back (Luke 9:61,62). He finished his course with his eyes fixed on Christ (Phil. 1:6).
3. “I have kept the faith.” He preached all the “counsel of God”—never betraying any of the great doctrines (Acts 20:24-31). The apostle looked ahead to the “Judgement seat of Christ” where the “Crown of righteousness” will be given to those who “love his appearing.”

How important it is for us to look with a heart of love for the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may receive the “crown of righteousness.”

V. THE CROWN OF GLORY

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. 1 Peter 5:2-4

The “crown of glory” is a special reward for the faithful, obedient God-called shepherd. The shepherd will earn this “crown of glory” by:

1. Feeding the Flock. He is to proclaim the Word of God without fear or favor, and when necessary, he will “reprove, rebuke and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:2-5).
2. Taking the spiritual oversight of the church. The shepherd is responsible to God for the message preached to his people. No shepherd should preach to please the people; he is to please his Lord (Gal. 1:10).
3. Being an example to the flock.
4. He is not to serve for the reward of money. Yet, the flock is responsible to care for his physical needs.
5. He is to be a spiritual leader, and not a dictator.
6. He is to walk with God, always seeking His counsel through a Spirit-filled life.